

THE OMEN



Volume 55.5

11/11/2021

stood in line behind ed at the kern today



3



3



BOTTOM TEXT

IN THIS ISSUE...

Speak:

I Don't Know What Romance Means... p.6

Leodump Part 1... p.8

Brownie Logic... p.10

Open Mic hosted by BARS... p.10

Jay relives the Butt Incident... p.11

Ida confesses... p.12

HELP. I NEED IT... p.15

Deathfest Part 4... p.16

A gender to be feared... p.24

Lies:

Hampshire - 2.5 stars... p.25

Love wins... p.27

Why Children Should Have Cell Phones... p.28

Come to our club! Jesus is here!... p.29

Wayne's not like other op-ed writers... p.30

Hate:

Cringe callout... p.31

Whatever The Fuck This Is... p.31

Staff Box: (In order of appearance)

Jay: Doofus Good

Leo: Chaotic Sleepy

Juliana: Barbie Lore

Ida: Neutral Tired

Nicholas: Slawful Evil

Peter: Neutral Old

Jess: Gakupo Neutral

Alex: Fruitful Good

Bennett: Lawful Joker

Front Cover: Leo Zhang and Jay Poggi

Back Cover: Juliana Saxe

Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in any format (no PDFs please) by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to omen@hampshire.edu, the Omen Office, Leo's mailbox (1593), or Jay's mailbox (0370).

Policy

The Omen is a bimonthly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous. Send us your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fan fiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited, and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish.

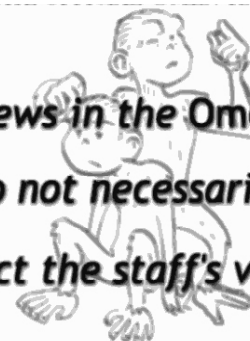
Your submission must include the name you use around campus: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. (Note: Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.)

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which usually takes place on alternate Thursday nights in the basement of Merrill in the company of a computer with an extremely inadequate monitor. You should come. We don't bite. You can find the Omen on other Thursdays in Saga, the post office, online at <http://expelallo.men>, and just about any other place we can find to put it.

Views in the Omen (5)

Do not necessarily (7)

Reflect the staff's views (5)



EDITORIAL

SEND IN THE CLOWNS

by Leo Zhang and Jay Poggi



Salu-fucking-tations, Omenites.

Allow us to introduce ourselves: we are Leo Zhang and Jay Poggi, your new editors! Hear our names and tremble, or laugh mockingly, or shrug with defiant indifference, your choice.

To begin, we must first express our deepest appreciation for our Interim Editor, Isaiah Woods. Like all leaders, Isaiah was born suddenly and without explanation. It happened like this:



One October night—after hours of layout work in the Airport Lounge—Leo, myself, and our then-editor, Ida Kao, made our sleepy way out of the Library and into the chilly dark outside. We walked together, talking of our work, of what we had done and what was left to do, until we reached a fork at which Leo and I would turn right toward Dakin and Merrill, and Ida would turn left toward Enfield. Leo and I waved farewell to Ida, and realized she had stopped dead in her tracks.

“Ida?” I said.

“You good?” Leo asked.

She stood straight and tall as a meter stick, craning her neck toward the star-speckled sky above. Leo and I looked at each other. *What the fuck?* we were thinking.

Before we had time to say or do anything, Ida opened her mouth and spoke in a voice that could have only been her own, yet it reverberated with an immense distance, as though it came from somewhere further away than any human alive could possibly understand:

“I must go. My people need me.”

A flash of white and a wave of burning heat sent Leo and I stumbling backward, holding our hands in front of our eyes. The light dimmed just enough for us to make out, between our fingers, the shape of Ida, her feet spewing bright tendrils of flame, soaring starward. We could do nothing but watch, mouths agape, as the light of her rapidly retreating foot-fire dimmed until it was no brighter than any of the other stars that hung in the sky, then winked out entirely.

We said nothing. What can you say after watching your friend blast off, unaided by a vehicle of any kind, into the one place that hasn't been corrupted by capitalism?

If either of us had had a train of thought, it would've been interrupted by the sound of a stack of paper landing at our feet.

We looked down. A stack of paper had landed at our feet. Except it was no ordinary stack of paper, but an issue of *The Omen*. I picked it up and held it between Leo and me. The cover was blank save for a left-aligned title printed in what must have been 16 point Courier New.

“The Omen: Volume 0, Issue 0,” it read.

We flipped through the pages. Inside, we found instructions for a papercraft of some sort. Feeling lost in our editorlessness, we hurried to the Omen Office. There, we assembled a pile of scrap

paper on the desk and got to work. We toiled into the night's wee-est hours, folding, taping, tearing, and re-taping, until finally, as the sun we had no way of seeing began to rise, our creation sat before us, complete. It had two arms and two legs. It had a head with two eyes, two ears, a mouth, and a nose. It resembled, in just about every way, a Hampshire College Student.

Leo held up a pencil and followed Issue 0.0's last instructions: they inserted the graphite tip into the homunculus's left nostril. We heard a sharp *click*.

The being's eyes shot open.

"Greetings," they said with an eerily human voice. "I am iSaiah, artificial editor. Your purchase includes a two year protection plan and a two week free trial of Omen SmartEdit."

"Two weeks?" Leo and I lamented in sync.

"How much for the full version?" Leo asked with a voice tinged with pessimism.

"\$420.69 per month," iSaiah recited dutifully.

"Nice," the word left my and Leo's mouths without needing to ask permission. My brain processed the number a second time, outside of its cultural context. "Fundcom'll never agree to that," I muttered sourly.

"No," agreed a faraway voice, "they won't." It was Ida, projecting her thoughts into our brains from who knows how many lightyears away. "You have two weeks. Two weeks to learn how to be editors."

So we learned. For the next fourteen days, we grappled with the various responsibilities we would need to take on. We forged a spiteful, trustless, yet professional relationship with Adobe InDesign. We checked emails, made purchases, and planned events. In a brutal act of self-defense, we killed Dropbox. We did *not* feel sorry. All the while, iSaiah steered The Omen's proverbial ship with mechanical perfection, navigating us through the treacherous waters of a handful of equipment failures, a truckload of OSHA violations, and precisely two attempted coups. They even managed to expose a sinister conspiracy involving Hampshire's president, which led to campus wide conversations about waste management and the importance of recycling.



But it was not meant to last. On October the 29th, as the Omenites sat relaxing in the Merrill Living Room after a day spent distributing iSaiah's first and last issue, our time ran out. iSaiah requested a credit card number. We did not comply. Without sufficient funds to perpetuate their programming, iSaiah performed a factory reset. All in attendance wept. Two great leaders lost to such cartoonish sci-fi nonsense in less than a month.

When the homunculus rebooted some minutes later, they were no longer iSaiah, but Isaiah, an artificial Hampshire College student. They remembered nothing of editing, but they remembered The Omen, and have continued writing for it to this day. You will find two of their pieces in this issue.

Oh, also, Ida came back. We would be violating several intergalactic nondisclosure agreements by writing about it here, so uh, you'll just have to trust us when we say everything's cool now.



Now, you may be wondering why this entire thing has been from Jay's perspective so far. For one, I'm a suuuper mean co-editor who made him do all the work~ "It's what Ida and iSaiah would want," I told him, lying. Ahaha, the truth is, I've been so swamped recently, all my days filled with writing for classes and extended periods of wall-staring. So imagine my surprise when I was given back the editorial document and saw paragraphs of Jay waxing poetic about our very harrowing two-homunculus-weeks, and the loss of iSaiah (I still have not emotionally recovered). I don't even really think I can add anything, and frankly I think nothing I say could beat Jay's own embellishments, so please consider me the snarky and dry companion to Jay's excitement and storytelling in the little space I have here.



With all that backstory out of the way, we now present to you our first (for real) issue. We are as proud of our work as we are disgusted by it. It is really, really bad in, like, a *lot* of places. But that's okay. Leo and I have sworn to each other never to cower from shittiness, but to bear it triumphantly, like a turd-emblazoned heraldic banner. We hope the mental image of such a turd-banner (which I'm realizing I should really draw) reminds you that yes, you too can be shitty at whatever it is you

do; and that should you ever want to put your shit where others can, or dare I say *will* look at it, the Omen will always be happy to oblige.



We both think that there is little else more valuable to college students than a platform where they're able to say whatever they're willing to attach their name to, a place where they know that whatever they submit will be seen and appreciated no matter how good or bad it is. The ability for self-expression, whether that be through deep well-written prose or pictures like Pasta Face (vol. 55 issue 4 — go look at it Pasta Face means everything to me), is something we hold very close to our hearts. And as such, we encourage you to submit, and to look at everyone else's submissions, because there's always a laugh to be had or something to be learned.



Before we sign off, allow me to put the buffoonery on pause for a moment to express Leo's and my genuine gratitude for Ida Kao, our former editor. We might not have become Omenites, much less Omen editors, if not for her unending commitment to loudly loving the old rag whenever and wherever she can get away with it.



Seriously, I was already intrigued by the concept of the Omen before I even met Ida, but she took that interest and amped it up tenfold. I've seen few people who have been so genuinely passionate about anything, and that kind of love and excitement is what drives people like us to take the helm, even when we're still bumbling around like fools.



Ida, you inspired these two pathological introverts to take on more responsibility than we probably ever wanted, and for that, we thank you. I'll admit that filling shoes as big as yours is an intimidating prospect, even with our four combined feet. We love The Omen. We love it a lot. We probably love it more than even some of our favorite pieces of media, and we *definitely* love it more than Hampshire College. But if we loved The Omen as much as you do, we would both literally be dead. All the same, I hope we'll prove worthy successors.



And on that note, that's a temporary bye-bye for us!

Jay and Leo



SECTION SPEAK

I Don't Know What Romance Means Rowan Benhart

I'm aro ace. Or that's what I tell people. It's simpler that way. If I want to be more specific, I might say greyro ace. But even that... it's vague. And for good reason. While I'm very clear on my sexuality (specifically a lack thereof), my romanticism is much more confusing.

I first identified as aro around a year ago, in early December, 2020. I was in a psychology class, and one of the final assignments was to describe the difference between romantic and platonic love. I couldn't. At the time, I'd already realized I was asexual, and could easily identify that I didn't feel sexual attraction. There were plenty of things I definitely didn't want to do, like sex and kissing, but that was because I was ace. But anything else romantic I could think of? Cuddling, dates, even partnerships and marriage I saw myself doing as easily with a friend as with a romantic partner. But if I couldn't even understand the difference between romantic and platonic love, was I even alloromantic? I wasn't sure. I said Aro, or greyro, or if I wanted to be really specific, WTFro. Because I didn't know, but I knew that I wasn't strictly alloromantic.

At the time, I was in a romantic relationship with an allo, cishet man. Now, he was and is a wonderful person, but he was very unfamiliar with queer theory when I met him. I taught him much of what he knew about queerness, and the rest he researched on his own. When I realized I was aro, I started bringing up the idea of a QPR with him. And while he was in every way the gentleman and open to the idea, I could tell it was breaking his heart to learn that I didn't see him in a "romantic" light. And I couldn't keep doing it anymore. To me or to him, I'm not sure. It hurt to see a man who was very much in love with me, who'd experienced what seemed like romantic love reciprocated, begin to doubt his value and my love because I'd realized I didn't... couldn't love in that way.

Or could I? I'm still unsure.

I want to hug my friends. (I do hug them)

I want to cuddle with them in bed.

I want a partner (or more!), where we negotiate specific things we want from the relationship. Just not... a romantic one.

I want to give and receive forehead kisses.

I want to go on dates.

I want to flirt.

I want to get married. Raise kids with someone.

But all of those things. They all feel platonic to me. I'd be happy to do them with any close friend.

One day, I learned of the term “quioromantic”. A term where one's romantic identity is defined by not knowing. By not knowing your identity, or by not knowing the difference between platonic and romantic love.

I don't know what romance means.

But I know what I want.

Isn't that enough?

Rowan Benhart (They/Them, Xey/Xem) 

Leodump Part 1

By Leo Zhang

I should start this by saying that I hope no one ever expects me to have a good title for any piece that I ever write, because I won't. Cool? Cool. Then I should follow by saying that the only reason—well, maybe not the only reason, but, like, a big one—I was inspired to write this was because of my wonderful co-editor Jay, who jumped straight in with his “Write Like A Fiddler” piece from the last issue. His new attempts at a *laissez faire* approach to writing are really cool to me, because I know we're both perfectionists, and trying to write just for the sake of writing without worrying about whether or not it's *really truly good enough* to publish is far, far easier said than done. Trying to let go of that perfectionism is a nice goal to aim for, and something the Omen is perfect for, because compared to the way our issues will look after being laid out (bad, in case you didn't catch my drift there—our layouts are shitty and we intend to keep it that way), I'm pretty sure that comparatively, my piece will be just fine. Although, I do have to mention that for the past two weeks, *all* I've been doing is writing and writing and writing for classes and personal projects, and this is the second-to-last thing on my writing to-do list, so pardon me if it's especially shit because I'm all written out at this point. No more words left in my brain.

I've actually been wanting to write something for the Omen specifically for a while now, but I had no idea what to say. Honestly, I still don't, so you're all stuck with this word garbage instead. All I know is that this is my chance to live out my longtime dream of being known to anyone besides my parents and my two cats (their names are Mac and Cheese, by the way).

So, like... Hey? Hi. I'm Leo, pronounced like ley-o and *not* lee-o (because I'm special and cool (it's actually because I stole it from a song)), they/he, and I like writing. I don't really know what else to say about myself. For all I go on about having a “longtime dream of being known,” I do want to be kind of unknowable too. I mean, don't we all? But also, I really just don't know how to talk about myself. At all. Like, what are traits of mine that I could tell someone? I could talk about how I stick my hand out of the window when my friends drive me places like the world's laziest dog, or about how I know everything about Eve—that's the Japanese singer-songwriter, not, like, Eve from the Bible or something—there is to know. I guess I could also mention that I've subconsciously based my entire personality off of Professor Layton games that I've played consistently since I was eight years old, or that there's no one more passionate about tea than me, or that I can and will ramble for hours if you even vaguely prompt me to talk about my original story universe. Does that help anyone feel like I'm an actual person, though? Like, for real.

I dunno, sometimes I feel like I'm just the world's weirdest collection of traits. Like, “an elegant video game mentor character, the bi flag, someone who's *really* scared of everything but thinks the ocean is *really* cool, a person who is just so sleepy all the time, the smallest little cat you've ever seen, an anime idol, the ‘sharp-tongued and snarky best friend’ trope, and the personification of all things having to do with dreams walk into a bar,” except they're all a college student who panics every time they lock their door from the outside because what if I just locked my keys in my room. And none of this has to do with writing, which is what I started this piece intending to talk about, but sometimes I get a little off track, it seems.

Writing is something that comes semi-naturally to me. I can't bust out thousands of words a day for NaNoWriMo or stop myself from getting way too stressed every time I need to write an essay, don't get me wrong. But I like writing. It's a way for me to get my thoughts out without, usually, actually having to say them. They can be projected onto characters, or they can exist through metaphors that

only I know the true meaning of. What you're reading right now is not my usual style of writing—my usual style has been described as “dreamlike” and “weird and good.” I'm not usually so straightforward, because I'd rather keep readers on their toes, have them guessing what I mean. And I *want* people to read those things, knowing that they'll be able to appreciate the fact that there's a deeper message while not knowing what that message necessarily is. Maybe that's selfish of me, I don't know.

I'm realizing now, too, how formal and stuck-up this entire piece makes me sound. I promise I'm not that horrid to talk to in person; hell, even if you just text me, I throw capitalization out the window and go “haaaai hai hai hai omggg >:3” as a result of being terminally online since I was twelve. I'm a loser who gets super excited about pretty skies and the moon and covers their mouth with long sweater sleeves when they laugh. I write things for characters as if they were texting in the year of 2021 (“lol who are you the texting police?? your debate kid energy is off the charts”). You will never see my eyes light up more than if you ask me to tell you anything about my special interests. My online friends have declared that I am soup, so they send me any post, meme, or image having to do with soup, and as a result I've seen several soup posts multiple times just because of the “oh my goodness... soup... Leo look it's you” instinct. Is this just discouraging people from wanting to talk to me now that I've started going on about what a loser I am? Oops.

Moral of the story: I don't know how to talk about myself, and when I get nervous, I end up talking in circles about the same thing over and over again. Great. Love that for me. Still, I wanted to put something in the Omen, and I sure as hell didn't want to wait for the next issue. Was it worth sitting in the actual dormitory basement all afternoon, and is it worth the pages? Sure, I suppose so. You tell me.

Hopefully this awakens something in me and I'll be able to start writing these kinds of straightforward personal pieces more often. I have the perfect platform for it, anyways. But that just means all of you will be stuck with *even more* of my #CertifiedLeoBrainJunk from now on! Isn't that just so exciting~?

If, for any reason, any part of this made you think, “huh, I'd like to get to know this freak,” then first of all, why? And second of all, thanks? I mean, I'm always down to talk, and again, I swear I'm not actually this dry in person. But I'm going to be real here, I'm so fucking tired right now that I can't be bothered to pull out more than two tildes for this piece so you'll just have to trust me on this one.

Hmm, until next time then, I think! I mean, you'll see me in the Omen editorials and stuff, anyways, so even if I don't make one of these pieces again I am still ever-present. And remember: I'm trying to follow Jay's lead and write like a fiddler, so no getting on my case for the fact that I haven't looked over or edited this document at all, okaaay~?

Okay, cool. Now that we're all on the same page, then, I bid you farewell until the next time I decide to shove my word garbage into your hands!

(I hope this wasn't a complete waste of your time, and if it was, then... oops again.) 

Submitted by Leo Zhang

HOW MANY TIMES JOSIAH MUTTERED
“BIZARRE” TO HIMSELF IN THE SPAN OF
TWO HOURS WHILE INVESTIGATING THE
PROBABLY HAUNTED OMEN MAC: 10 

Brownie Logic

By Ida Kao

A few weeks ago, Juliana was offering students in FundCom brownies. However, she was claiming that the brownies were not the best. I felt the need to step in and correct her using logic in order to prove that her brownies were in fact not “not the best.”

My argument is as follows:

Premise 1: Free food is the best food.

Premise 2: Brownies are food

Premise 3: The brownies Juliana is offering are free.

If you accept these premises to be true, you must conclude the following:

Conclusion: The brownies Juliana is offering are the best food. 🐑



BARS Presents: Delinquent Cypher

Submitted by Lia Smith

Location: Emily Dickinson Hall

Time: Thursday, November 18, 2021 - 8:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Contact: dmc21@hampshire.edu

From 8:30PM-10PM at Emily Dickinson Hall, loud music will preface a live hip-hop set featuring Hampshire's own Building Alliance Through Rap Songs. Following the BARS performance, the mic will be open to audience members to perform their own music/poetry/art. Free food will be provided! Sponsored by Theatre Board. 🐑

The Hampshire College 50th Anniversary Butt Incident (The Kern, October 16, 2021)



Confessions of a Former Editor

By Ida Kao

Confession 1: I don't miss being editor at all. In fact, the plan was to step down last semester so I wouldn't be overwhelmed with keeping The Omen going on top of Div III, there just wasn't any viable candidate to pass the editorship along to. The alums I panic DMed for the entire 2020-2021 school year are probably thanking their lucky stars that so many students were interested after a full year or so of me wondering whether I would be the editor to finally kill this paper off. Now we've got not just two co-editors, we've got students excited to draw covers, help out with social media posts, looking through the archives, and of course, writing disturbingly well executed erotic fanfiction. The Omen is in such good hands for the foreseeable future, and that means I've done what I needed to do.

Confession 2: It's so much work. The Omen isn't a newspaper, of course. It's impossible to run a newspaper as one person plus whoever is willing to write or draw something and do little else. It can't even be a small group. You can ask the alums who tried to run The Climax, The Howler, The Forward, The Examiner, whatever the hell The Logo was trying to do with all of those student evaluations of faculty, or even Fred and The TP, which were specifically for those living in Merrill House (or was it Dakin?). (Fun fact: The TP was, unsurprisingly, distributed in the bathrooms.) Good journalism, or news reporting, or whatever you want to call it, takes lots of effort by a lot of people, and at Hampshire you're going to always get skewered for being too slightly biased to one side while balancing the stress and workload of being a full time student. At some point in the 90s the student government at the time, Community Council, paid someone to run said Council's official newspaper and it *still* stopped publishing after a few years. If giving students money at a school where everyone is broke can't keep a paper going, can you imagine how much love students need to have for a paper that has never had a paid position (to my knowledge) to approach 30 years of publishing?

Nonetheless, to quote the alum that started The Permanent Press (I still chuckle at the irony), every paper is a labor of love. The Omen involves talking to people and making them aware it exists, staying up late at night staring at a barely functioning iMac, and most bafflingly, explaining to students that yes, we mean *anything* you are willing to put your name on. I am the 21st Omen editor. There have been *20* students before me at Hampshire College who have been willing to lose sleep in order to throw together a bunch of random memes and scribbled drawings on scrap paper and old high school poetry, always without pay, and never without writing some commentary on Hampshire in at least one editorial. And now there are two after me who are similarly willing to give up their precious rest to keep the longest running paper on campus going. Hell, there are even more willing to spend hours in a dinky dorm basement every other week doing Omen things. And by Omen things I mean whatever it is we want, because that's kind of what The Omen is.

Confession 3: I have so much more freedom to do what I want to do. I still need to show Jay and Leo the ropes as they figure out the best way to do things and remind them when they forget to do something on the never ending checklist, but I can now focus my attention on, well, being a student, and on doing what doesn't need to happen but can. Go through the archives more! Get the janky Omen office computer replaced for the umpteenth time! Host events that aren't just layout meetings! Write more submissions!

Confession 4: I probably would have transferred out if it weren't for The Omen. I've got other things at this school that I really care about, of course. I've got FundCom, I've got my wonderful chair, I've got the freedom to take whatever class catches my fancy. I've also seen overworked, underpaid, and universally beloved staff get laid off, students who care about campus but were unable to deal with the stress and the drama, and far too many brilliant, talented faculty after being told they couldn't earn a wage from the College. It has sucked, and for many it has sucked too much for them to put up with, yet I still have my reasons for staying.

To my knowledge, there has only been one Omen editor who did not graduate from Hampshire. The Omen has been shockingly good at maintaining retention rates of the students who regularly submit to it. Considering our student body is less than half of what it typically is, and Google is telling me that more than 1 in 4 freshmen do not end up graduating from here, administrators should be taking notes.

Confession 5: The Omen is an institution in itself, and that matters. Zole, The Omen's 7th editor, was telling me that The Omen's age was a huge deal even when he was a student. The Omen wasn't even 10 years old when he was in charge. Now we're nearly triple that age. The only other student groups on this campus older than The Omen are Mixed Nuts and Red Scare, and these are not groups that record history in the way publications do. That has huge consequences for who and what is remembered. It's also really hilarious that something of such gravity and importance has copious amounts of erotica in its pages.


Of course, that's what makes The Omen what it is. No college will want to advertise that they've got a paper that publishes porn! They just want to show off the shiny exterior. (Check the official Hampshire College Instagram... there's a reason they only took a picture of the front cover of the 50th Anniversary issue and didn't reference the contents, one of which was a scathing three page editorial from the then-Omen editor and then-student trustee eviscerating then-President Hexter for who-even-knows-what.) But if a student wants to publish porn, then by the grace of whatever deity you believe in, we will publish it, no matter how eyebrow raising, and no matter how riddled with spelling and grammatical errors it is. And your peers will pick it up and read it! That audience isn't something the internet can provide.

Confession 6: The Omen is a lot like Hampshire, when you think about it. I don't like admitting that because I am excited by The Omen, both its archives, which are surprisingly relevant to campus happenings these days, and my freedom to do what I want, and I like that way more than I like Hampshire as a whole with its strangely convoluted requirements and ever-changing standards. The Omen comes with its own intricacies and confusing parts that I had to confront as editor, but as just another submitter, it's still as refreshingly straightforward as ever.

Confession 7: No one can control The Omen, any more than they can control all the students, staff, and faculty on this campus. This isn't Stephanie Cole's Omen, and hasn't been for longer than I have been alive. It's not my Omen, and in many ways it isn't Jay and Leo's Omen, even though they're the editors! No one can really predict what's reaching the Omen inbox until we log in and see what shows up. I think I'm supposed to reference that Forrest Gump quote about life being a box of chocolates, because we really don't know what we're gonna get for the next issue, but it's more like the box of shoes Climbers Coalition has locked in the RCC storage closet. You have a good idea of the general contents, and they're all kind of stinky and gross but they're useful so you gotta keep it around and drag it out every once in a while so you can stick your hand in there and get what you need out of it. And sometimes random stuff

from elsewhere in the closet falls in, which you weren't expecting. That's where this analogy falls apart because oftentimes the random stuff will just get put back in the closet where it belongs, but with The Omen you just keep it there, hoping that someone will get something out of it. It seems someone really does, because random students I don't know keep submitting, and they get laid out, and I'm excited that it keeps happening.

Confession 8: I'll always be an Omenite, and I'm looking forward to the day I receive an invitation to the next Omen reunion. I believe the first one was for The Omen's tenth year of publishing, but since then it's been about every five years. I say "about" since the events of the 2017-2018 (specifically Chloe, the editor at the time, going on field study and then the flood of Merrill basement over Winter Break) kind of threw off the pattern of having an every Volume that ends in a 0 corresponding with every five years passing. But that's not a problem for me to figure out, and for that I am glad.

Confession 9: I'm weirdly unhappy with what I've written so far. I think it's because I'm so short on sleep, and I have this nagging feeling that every single point could have been expanded on further and/or at the very least, executed in a less ramble-y manner. I especially suck at conclusions, and it feels like I've left something unsaid before moving onto the next confession. Plus, I think I'm pretty open about discussing all of the points I made, so are they really confessions? It's also customary (and even if it weren't, it just feels appropriate) to write something reflecting on my time as editor and pass on the torch. It's a bit strange to call this that as it's appearing after the editorial that makes it clear who the new editors are. My last editorial was for the 50th Anniversary issue, which I wasn't expecting to be my last, and the one immediately after was when we made Isaiah editor for shits and giggles. So this is the issue where it gets put in, even though it doesn't really make a whole lot of sense to put it here, and even if this didn't come out the way I wanted, at all, that's kind of just how it is at Hampshire, and with The Omen, and I've come to peace with that. I'll still stick around to be the grumpy, overly serious parental figure who's seen it all, writing about Hampshire history and sifting through the mountains of back issues in our archives, throwing together submissions at the last minute, and ready to pull out whatever wild story I've heard from alums for all the bright-eyed, bushy-tailed students that cross the threshold into the Omen office during layout. It's gonna be fun, and I'm excited to see what Jay and Leo are going to do during their tenure. 

Submitted by Ida Kao

"The mega-uranium also does have country vibes"

-IDA KAO 


A Desperate Plea

By Juliana Saxe

A bunch of issues ago Ida published a piece trying to locate a Gerard Way White Bread Duck AU fanfiction and was indeed successful in her search. Miraculously her search was answered, and the Gerard Way White Bread Duck AU was retrieved! It can be read by all. Due to that success I now submit my desperate plea. I need your help - to find this music video.

Now I'll admit I don't remember the band or the melody or more than (1) lyric but what I do remember was the plot of this music video. So the plot followed this guy who was explicitly shown as being a loser and not popular in your 'typical American high school' (that only ever seems to exist in media), and showed a shrine to the romantic interest in this story. During the music video there was a point where the main character became 'cool' (i don't remember how he became cool) and then the music video showed all the materials of the shrine flowing out the garage as it was being unconstructed, as cool people don't build shrines. There was a clip of an American flag being raised to the top of the flag pole to represent the main character gaining coolness and respect of his peers, and then they showed a car with a door that opens up, and his romantic interest (a cheerleader) is in the shot. I think she talked to him? I didn't remember much about her. The concept of her was all that mattered - they didn't give her much concrete character development. Then for some reason the main character lost whatever quality or item that made him cool with his peers and you saw the reversal of all the previous shots. The car door shut, the flag was lowered and the romantic interest walked away from the camera. While the shrine was being reconstructed the lyric was something like I'm rebuilding the shrine in my garage.

I do have some constraints of when I watched this music video. Let me set the scene - I was watching this music video at my grandmother's house, on my ipod touch. I was lying on my stomach with my feet into a triangle, and my arms (and thus the iPod touch) was dangling off the bed. I also remember while I was watching the music video one of the suggested video was a song by Fall Out Boy. Specifically the cover art of the kid with the American flag on his face. Some more time constraints - it was back when YouTube's logo was still the old TV. I don't remember any specific dates but I also remember that it was during a time where having an iPod touch was really cool. I remember that I felt really cool to have it.

This music video has haunted me. I have clear, distinct memories of the plot. I know that it existed. Yet for years I have been unable to locate it. Putting "I'm rebuilding the shrine in my garage" into various lyric search websites has resulted into only hours of wasted time and pages and pages of unrelated music that I have since forgotten. This music video is the only reason I want to be famous, to force the general public into finding this music video for me. Unfortunately I have not actually achieved fame, so I must recruit you my dear reader! Go - go forth into the dark wilderness that is the web. 

Gone Girl is an amazing story. It's better than Shakespeare. I will take no criticism on this fact.

By Juliana Saxe 

How to Revive Deathfest (Part IV)

by Ethan Ludwin-Peery F09, FST F10, & Alex V F10

Once per Deathfest

A Once per Deathfest ability is exactly what it sounds like — an ability a character can use exactly once per Deathfest. This is their masterpiece; it is the highest expression of whatever nonsense bullshit theme you based the character on. Every character has one, and each one should be different. But they need to be fun, be interesting, and most importantly, they need to make a big impact on the game. This is the character's chance to shine.

When they die, characters will often try to use their Once per Deathfest, and you should usually let them do it. So when you're designing these abilities, it's good to keep this in mind, and design abilities that would work well as grand exits if the character chooses to use it in this way. The Once per Deathfest can also sometimes be a 'Hail Mary' play to avoid death. Keeping this in mind, however, make sure you give them an ability they can also use even if they're not about to die.

The base bog-standard default Once per Deathfest ability is, "Your character does [extreme thing related to their character theme]. Roll a d20 to see what happens." A time travel wizard would summon a random historical figure. A giant fighting robot would use their secret technique. A pair of shoes would begin to emit an unearthly odor. This gives the player some control and lets them be creative with their big action — they can say, I try to summon this kind of historical figure, or I target my secret technique at this monster/character/mountain/God/DM.

But not total control — what happens depends on how well the character rolls. If they roll a low number, something bad happens to them (and everyone else), and they probably die. If they roll a high number, the plan goes off brilliantly and they reshape the course of Deathfest. If they roll a number in the middle, something incredibly chaotic happens. Either way, there is a big impact.

That's an easy way to make Once per Deathfests. We encourage you to be more creative, but this is a good place to start.

We strongly recommend against giving a character two Once per Deathfest abilities. One per character, please.

FST's note: As with all rules, feel free to break this one if you think about how it might break the game. To my recollection we've had a couple characters which only had once per Deathfests, but they were proportionately less OP and, critically, proportionately less zany. Honestly, this didn't work very well, but I know if I see a rule I want to break it, so my cautionary note here is to remember that the overall funness of the game is better preserved by letting people do extremely wild stuff sometimes.

Equipment

Character items were loot drops when the character died. They also provided flavor for the player; pick one or two things that fit the character theme, and don't make them too useful. These are not abilities — they don't let the character do anything special. If you give them a kazoo, it's just a normal kazoo.

We tried doing something interesting with items a couple of times but it never worked out, so probably don't bother. But also, don't get rid of them entirely. Every Deathfest there was someone who came up with something weird they could do

with the items they had collected.

Breaking the Rules

Every character should have at least three abilities. Every character should have a Once per Deathfest ability. Other than that, you can get creative, provided you're keeping an eye on gameplay.

You can break the rules as much as you want, as long as you make sure to give the resulting character to a player who you know can handle it. One time, for example, there was a Cryptographer character. They had very powerful abilities but the name and text of the abilities were literally encrypted, so you couldn't read them. To be able to use the abilities, you actually had to figure out which cypher was used to encrypt each ability and then decrypt it while playing, so you could tell what your abilities were. This would be no fun for most players, but we gave it to one of Hampshire's few math students. He managed to decrypt three of his five abilities before he died, and had a great time doing so.

Another time someone was running a tier where all the characters were different Batmans. You know, Firefighter Batman, Ballet Batman, Dentist Batman, etc. The first time they went to print out these characters, however, they made a mistake with the printing settings and ended up with a document of all 20 Batmans stapled together. Some DM had the bright idea of giving this stack of 20 Batmans to Chris Sommer as his "character", with the restriction that each Batman now had only 1 HP, and Chris was forbidden from winning. Sure enough, Chris had a great time being 20 Batmans, didn't win Deathfest, and it didn't break the game.

Healing

Deathfest is about dying, and so for the most part, you shouldn't give out very many healing abilities. But healing is a powerful incentive in such a dangerous sport, and so you can include it from time to time.

We would recommend giving healing abilities to no more than one or two characters per tier, and even these abilities should be pretty weak. For example, a Florist character with a 2/tier ability that creates a flower which heals 1d4 HP when eaten.

Another option is giving abilities that might heal or might damage people. For example, the Demon Nurse character had an ability called "Open Your Food Tract, Mammal" which among other things could be used to heal a character for 1d8-3 HP. If the total of that roll was negative, the target would take damage instead.

Forbidden Abilities

Traditionally, there were two abilities that were expressly forbidden. Characters are not allowed to fly, and characters are not allowed to teleport. Even if you base a character off of an angel, they should not be able to fly; even if you base a character off of the X-Men's Nightcrawler, they should not be allowed to teleport. And by no means should you ever give a character an item or ability that explicitly grants teleportation or flight, even temporarily.

The reason for this is simple: characters that can fly or teleport have an easy way to avoid all sorts of obstacles. They can and will skip entire portions of the adventure, and this will lead to things getting very messy very fast. Both abilities seem like they are no big deal, but trust us, this was a tradition for a reason. If you make a character that is a giant bumblebee, you can give them rollerskates if you want, but don't let them fly.

While letting characters teleport around the world will break your game, letting them teleport between dimensions is pretty ok. We called it...

Tierporting

Some abilities can allow (or force) characters to get out of Dodge.... Way out of Dodge. Like, across the multiverse. Occasionally, as either an intended effect or a side effect of an ability, a “tierporting” ability will send a player (and their character) from one game to another. These aren’t “auto-advancements” to “skip” tiers. You don’t go from Tier I right to Tier II — instead they send someone from, for example, FST’s after school detention Tier I to Alex V’s gym class Tier I. Usually characters arrive in the same state of health or damage that they left. Occasionally, if funny or useful, they may take other characters with them.

DMs can also tierport characters if they feel it would serve the needs of the game. Sometimes wandering DMs would take on this role during Tier I and Tier II, and do some cross-pollination by abducting characters from one tier and dropping them into a different tier (with permission; don’t abduct someone’s characters without asking!).

Diseases

Some abilities create lasting effects, often in the form of diseases which modify — for good or ill — affected character’s stats, or which provide side effects that alter the game state through a character’s appearance, actions, etc (growing spots, dancing plagues, etc). You can have fun with these, but keep stat modifications relatively balanced unless the intent is to kill the character.

FST’s note: We toned these way down because the AIDS/herpes/STD jokes were not conducive to community norms, and promoted various “bad” ways of spreading contagion, meaning player actions which impinged on other player’s characters in bad “bad” behaviors rather than “funny” bad behaviors. You’ll want to talk with your fellow DMs about what kind of diseases you do and don’t think are OK to joke about when you get feedback on your character sheets, since your Tier I characters will end up in someone else’s deadgame, Tier III, etc.

ELP’s note: I’m torn because on the one hand diseases are a Deathfest tradition, but on the other hand they are almost always a big pain. Deathfest does not need any help spiraling out of control, and introducing abilities with the potential for exponential growth is a risky prospect. You may just want to avoid them altogether. We’re mostly mentioning this here because it’s something new DMs might think up on their own and we want you to be aware of the risks.

Group Mechanics

Sometimes it is fun to make multiple characters who have existing relationships and/or abilities that interact. You shouldn’t overuse this, but having one or two of these groups can be fun.

Sometimes you will have a group of characters that are thematically related. You might have a group of bakers. You might have the ghosts of several dead prime ministers. You might have twenty Batmans. This can be fun and a good way to put a strong theme or themes in your tier. You can even give these characters abilities that interact.

Sometimes you will have a group that works together. One time there were three pirate characters in a tier — the Pirate Captain, the Pirate Navigator, and the Pirate Gunner. The Captain had abilities that let all three pirates sail the high seas in search of plunder (i.e. tierport between tiers). The Navigator had abilities that let them pick their destination when tierporting, and provided tactical support to the other pirates. The Gunner had big guns.

Sometimes you will have a group of characters that work against each other. One time there were three Scottish Lord characters. All of them had an ability called “King of Scotland” which gave them a bunch of nice bonuses — but only if the other two Scottish Lord characters were dead. This encouraged them to fight one another for the crown, and the rest of their abilities helped them try to take each other out. One had a very aggressive set of combat abilities, one had stealth and magic abilities, and one had abilities that let him resist the abilities of the other two. There was also a “Thespian” character in this Tier with a passive ability that dealt 1d6 damage to anyone who said the name of the Scottish play, just to keep things interesting.

You can also make characters that aren’t part of a group but naturally form groups; like the Narrator character, whose abilities couldn’t help him, but could help (or hinder) other characters by retelling how their story went; or the Virgil character, who had to die in Tier I, go to a deadgame, pick another dead character, and use their abilities to guide both of them out of the underworld.

Don’t overdo this. Having one group of characters with group mechanics in your tier is fun and interesting. Having more than one is probably too much and too complicated. But in general, encouraging your players to interact more is good and interactive abilities are fun.

FST’s note: Michaela once designed a tier with entirely interlocking characters, but they were all flexible and optional. Stuff like a “friend” character who gets a small bonus for every “friend” they make, etc. This worked well because it gave players an incentive to invent interactions but it didn’t lock in characters to one group. I did something similar and had a couple of characters with abilities which made them seek out other people, but not a themed group. A tank, which wanted to find a rider so they could both get bonuses (but the tank got a special bonus if they betrayed the rider). A trophy spouse, who wanted a partner and both partners got to share damage dice (but the trophy spouse got a special bonus ability if their partner died), etc. This generally worked well to make players kill each other and it gave me an easy way to build up a strong play style in the characters’ stats and abilities, but if you’re doing a more plot-centered plot, it’ll probably be a distraction, so use judiciously.

Running Deathfest

Costumes are *highly* recommended, especially for DMs.

ELP: There was always food... but it was bad? I remember a lot of bad sandwiches. Am I wrong?

FST: Generally Deathfest food came in one of two forms — Sibies pizza, for GMs, and a whole lot of sandwich fixings, pretzels, chips, and every imaginable form of soda, for attendees (and DMs who run out of pizza). The main purpose of Excalibur was to pay for the snacks.

There was a beer garden in Spring 2009. It may have been Andy Rosequist’s fault.

For a while there was a lively tradition of livetweeting Deathfest, much of which was documented in The Omen (<https://tinyurl.com/deathfest2011>, courtesy of Zachary Clemente). As far as we can tell, this tradition ended with #deathpress in Fall 2013. We strongly recommend you bring this one back.

Deathfest does not “end” “on time”. Aim for a reasonable schedule but be prepared to be up until 3AM killing the last three moon robots who refuse to go quietly.

The Omen · Volume 55, Issue 5

If you run Deathfest in FPH, it goes something like this: Everyone meets in the main auditorium to get oriented, learn the themes, etc. The Tier I themes are announced and people go sit in a row of the auditorium matched to the Tier I they want. When each Tier has about the same number of people, the Tiers split up and go to classrooms for Tier I. As Tier I ends, people go back to the main hall. There is a brief recap, Tier II locations are announced, and people go to their Tier II or Deadgame. When Tier II ends, everyone comes back to the main auditorium for Tier III, and the game stays there until Deathfest is over.

Tier I list for Spring 2011

Preparing for Deathfest usually took us about two months. We set and announced the date about two months out, to my



recollection usually November and March. The theme and Tier III were decided, usually by vote, and DMs then picked deadgames or Tier Is. After Tier Is were planned, Tier IIs were decided. Characters were due in phases, mostly just to keep accountability so nobody was setting up 30 characters the night before (it sometimes still happened). We usually had several meetings to workshop characters and provide feedback. New DMs usually ran 'practice' tiers with the other DMs as players so they could try out the ropes, and it let the other DMs get a taste of being a player for once.

The other key part of planning ahead is advertising, but this will depend on how many people you hope to get at Deathfest. For a new event, in a moment when the college doesn't have a lot of money, it's hard to say what it should be like — only that you can think about how to get the word out to community members who might be interested, and starting early is better.

Death

The name of the game is Deathfest. Every character but (approximately) one will die that night. Deathfest is only fun and interesting as long as dying stays fun and interesting. Your job as a DM is to make sure that your players 1) die and 2) have fun doing so.

While Tier I and Tier II are running, the Tier III DM(s) and any other free DMs should have something entertaining running in the main hall, to entertain dead players and any spectators. Often we would show a movie or something.

Dangers of Basic Play

There are a number of things that seem like good ideas in the design stage but can stop your game like an old sock in a coffee grinder. This is where we warn you about these things.

Foot-High Walls

Sometimes you ask everyone to make an easy check to progress through the tier. This can take many forms. It can be climbing over a foot-high wall. It can be jumping a four-foot gap. It can be eating a very spicy curry to appease the local chef/dictator. It sounds simple, and probably you barely thought about this event when you added it to your tier.

In a d20 system, a check where you have to roll a 10 or higher to succeed (a DC of 10) is considered easy. So a DC of 8 for climbing over that foot-high wall should be super easy, right? Wrong! Assuming no modifiers to their checks, 40% of your players will fail this on their first attempt! Even worse, 16% will fail it twice in a row. About 6% will fail it on their first three tries.

If your luck is bad (and it will be!), you will end up with a couple of players who fail to climb over that wall five or six times in a row. This is no fun for them, because they are a dragon lord or elder god who has repeatedly failed to climb a fence, and are getting singled out for it. This is no fun for other players, because they are stuck waiting for the others to make it past this “minor” obstacle. And it is no fun for you, the DM. Don’t put mandatory obstacle checks in your tier, even easy ones.

“Roll to Avoid Damage”

A lazy DM can announce something like, “A red sports car has just done a flip off of the yacht and crashed into the swimming pool filled with mega-uranium. Everyone make a reflex save to avoid taking damage.” If you do this enough times, you will kill off half of your players and be ready to move on to the next tier. However, this is an extremely lazy excuse for running an adventure, and I cannot stress this enough, unbelievably boring for your players.

The reason this is boring is that it makes it so that players’ choices don’t matter. Sitting around and taking damage randomly is not fun. Being creative with your choices, taking risks in the face of danger, and dealing with the consequences is fun.

Some forms of global damage can be ok. “Everyone who doesn’t get out of the beer vats will have to make a save or take damage, as the beer turns to acid” is good because it encourages players to find a way to get out of the beer vats, and presumably on to the next part of the adventure. “Anyone who doesn’t find a buddy by next turn will have to make a reflex save or get attacked by a shark” is good because it encourages consequential interaction between the players. But we don’t think there’s ever a good time for the DM to hand out damage purely on the basis of a global dice roll.

It is ok to give players “everyone in the tier must roll to avoid damage” abilities, particularly as their Once per Deathfest, since in this case it is a player’s action causing the event, which increases their agency and makes it meaningful — “Charles dropped a nuke on Candyland and I died” is fun. Even so, these can get tired pretty fast, so don’t include too many.

FST’s quibble: I actually loved to do splash damage but only in tiny increments (maybe one point of damage) and as kind

of a flavor text. Nothing sets the scene (and gets people involved on their off-turn) like flavor damage from environmental hazards and/or other player's choices. I found it helped set people up to fight each other, which was one of my favorite strategies to up the tier kill count without seeming capricious. Occasionally someone down to their last HP would die as a result of flavor damage, though, so this did backfire. Use your best discretion as you balance making every kill count and the need to keep the game going, which means whittling down HP sometimes. I agree that giving players an incentive to problem solve is a better way than 'rocks fall everybody dies'.

Tier I

Running Tier I is the basis of running Deathfest. Most of what applies in Tier I also applies to Tier II, and somewhat to Tier III.

The basic structure of Tier I goes like this: The characters start off in a dangerous situation. Sometimes they face the same dangerous situation for the whole tier. Sometimes they progress through a series of encounters.

Whenever an encounter begins, the DM has everyone roll an initiative check. Whoever rolls highest goes first and can do one action (attack someone, go somewhere and pull a lever, use an ability, etc.). If you want the game to run smoothly, encourage players to keep their actions snappy and decisive. They say what they do, you tell them what to roll, they roll some dice, you tell them what happens.

Then on to the next character. Instead of keeping track of initiative with 20+ players, just go around clockwise (or if you must, widdershins) in a circle.

For a tier to be any fun, every character must get at least one turn before dying. A good tier will go around the table three or four times, so everyone who survives gets several turns, and really, the more the better.

There are a few big mistakes that are easy to make:

DO NOT give out damage randomly (see above). If people die randomly, then their actions don't matter, and there's no reason for them to engage. This is boring.

DO NOT punish players simply for taking actions. If everyone who does anything takes damage, people will learn to do nothing. This is boring.

DO allow players to experience the consequences of their own actions.

Generally, allowing characters to "succeed" at doing something they want to do, and to have an impact on the play state, but taking damage anyway, does allow them to feel engaged and rewarded for taking action but still die.

(FST's note: I liked to make characters perform wisdom or knowledge checks when they attempted to perform physical challenges, and then administer unexpected consequences for success. Want to knock down a door? No problem! You are going to go right through that door — but if you didn't make your wisdom check, you might come away with a full-body splinter problem. Want to try to drop-kick the sun? Sure, make a knowledge check. Oh, you didn't account for gravity? Well, you and the sun are hurtling opposite directions at millions of billions of miles an hour. It's getting colder, but the stars are so bright. Thank you for playing Deathfest. Letting people do what they want, but punishing them with their own success, can be a successful angle. You'll have to find your own playstyle — perhaps you rely on inter-player combat for

damage, or have players' actions affect others through 'splash damage.' Maybe you just want your team to fight a really big monster! It's up to you how you structure your tier and how you assign damage, but remember that encouraging people to play big, and play to their characters' want, usually makes a more fun game than players only trying to outthink the GM and not take any damage.)

By the end of Tier I, about half of your characters should be dead. Those who survive move on to Tier II. Those who die can join a dead game, go home, or stick around as spectators for Tier III.

Tier II

Tier II is traditionally co-run, with two DMs merging the survivors from their respective Tier I's into a single group. The Tier II may thematically resonate with both Tier I's, but it also needs to start to move your players into the Tier III, so it can help to have it connect to the main "plot" (i.e., mole people).

The exact structure of Tier II partnerships is up to DMs, and Tier II partners should discuss and get on the same page about how they would like to co-DM. This could look a lot of ways — taking turns, each running one "round" or encounter, each playing an "NPC" the players must fight while the other DM handles damage distro, etc. It depends on what makes each DM comfortable.

Otherwise, this is pretty much the same as a Tier I. Most of your characters should die. Those that survive go on to Tier III. The goal is to have about 20-30 players in Tier III, so if there are 5 Tier II's, that means 4-5 survivors from each. Those who die are dead forever, but many will stick around to watch Tier III, and of course they may want to see if they won fabulous prizes (see below).

Deadgames

When a player dies in Tier I, they can go to a deadgame. This is a special kind of Tier II game for dead players only. Each player returns with, traditionally, half their HP — although, again, as long as you think about how you will modify your play so you get the outcome you want, you can mess around with this rule. The goal is to kill a lot of people in a short tier, but to keep it player-centered, rather than a DM caprice.

Dead games are an opportunity for characters to return to life and have a shot at eternal glory. In dead games, dead players die again, but the one player (or MAYBE two players) that survives the dead game returns to life and goes on to Tier III.

To make this work, dead games have to be much more punishing than normal tiers. If you are DMing a dead game, you need to make sure that only one or two players are alive at the end of the dead game to go on to Tier III.

Tier III

Tier III is the culmination of all the deaths before, and also what brings your Deathfest Plot together. Tier III is also the tier with the largest audience:players ratio, so it's the most like a show.

This show is traditionally headed by one or two Tier III DMs, whose role is to embody the theme, orchestrate the plot, and run Tier III. Often the Tier III DMs will invite other DMs back to run sections of the tier, or to play NPCs — this is when folks let their inner theater kid out. You can do whatever you want with this, but that's usually how we did it.

The Omen · Volume 55, Issue 5

Sometimes, your Tier III DMs create NPC characters to be the sort of ‘big bad’ — this was an informal tradition, but it helped add dramatic tension. For example, in the Business Tier III Ethan and FST were two CEOs, and the lowly employees had to defeat the CEOs and their minions to win/survive/get the job. We had student loans on our minds.

Usually Tier III starts with a scene-painting heavy explanation of the situation, and then continues as “normal.” However, pace of play and scale in Tier III are faster and messier usually — people have been saving their once per Deathfests, or have been adding character details and explanations through Tiers I and II, and will have a clearer idea of how they want to play and what they want to do.

Usually, the Tier III DMs also go bigger here — more damage, faster, and distributed more widely. However, you want to balance this with making every Tier III death count.

By Tier III, people know what Deathfest’s deal is, so you just have to play big and fast and keep the energy up. While it feels “more important,” most people don’t actually get to play Tier III, and many people go to bed earlier than that. Most people will play Tier I only. So just have fun playing and know that it just needs to be a fun, theatrical, event and game.

Keep going until there is no one left to die. Deathfest goes to the last player(s) standing. 🐑

Submitted by Omen Staff (all of ‘em)

**“ON THIS SIDE IS MY
\$45,000 FURSUIT, AND
ON THIS SIDE IS THE CAR
THAT I TAKE TO CHILI’S”
– Juliana Saxe 🐑**

Submitted by Ida Kao

**“MRS. EAVES IS SEXY.”
–LEO ZHANG 🐑**

By Clive Rudolph

Finally, a gender identity that fits me



foone
@Foone

...

My gender is a dire warning, it's true 🐑

SECTION LIES



Hampshire (2021)



A film review by Isaiah Woods

Hampshire: or the making of a college directed by Ed Wingenbach is far from a perfect film. The plot is riddled with holes, the characters are often unappealing, and the story confusing. That being said, one should definitely not dismiss it right away as being out right bad, given there are certainly quite a few redeeming qualities. But is it really worth your watch?

The film opens on a gorgeous wideframe shot of a picturesque New England landscape, setting a high bar for its cinematography. However, this bar quickly plummets when we cut to a mass of unappealing brutalist brick buildings plopped right into the middle of our gorgeous setting. Whether the production designer was going for an ironic grittiness is certainly up for debate, but no matter whether or not you enjoy the extreme design choices, they do certainly help to build an identity for the film, a characteristic that I found it to be somewhat lacking in other areas.

I'll be honest: The plot is far from easy to follow. It took me several watches to really form a firm grasp on the cinematic world of the piece, and even now it is contestable whether or not I truly have a hold of it. However, unlike the design elements, this is quite clearly a very conscious choice based off of a combination verisimilitudinous idealism and outright pretention. And while this does in places work, I feel as if it does not sustain well throughout a feature length work such as this, giving it an often honed in and overplayed feel. And while, some of the overarching themes such as that of identity and societal impact have a strong foundation, we only ever really explore them at the surface level, making for what feels in places like a very two dimensional world.

It is important to note in my critique, that several of the movie's flaws can at least in part be attributed to the low production budget and threadbare creative team. It is without a doubt considerably more difficult to create a polished product with such limited resources, although it certainly has been done in the past. I think much of the films struggle to formulate an identity for itself is derived from the necessity of outsourcing labor to other, bigger name film makers. In fact, I believe that more than half of the script's dialogue was written by the writers and directors of other more prolific works such as "I call it the Aristocrats": an Amherst story and The Zoo. And while these artistic contributions actually work really well in little bits and pieces, their utter domination of the greater story makes for a messy and overall sophomoric feel.

Now, this is just my opinion, and I am well aware that it is completely subjective, but I feel as if the film's usage of character is incredibly frustrating. To elaborate upon this thought, the writing for our protagonist and many of the primary characters feels almost cartoonish in its attempt at sophistication. While I grant you, there is no shortage of distinct character traits, that is not in itself equivalent to the presence of well developed characters. In fact, in many places, this critic feels like the subtextual need for identity is responsible for the lack thereof. Not that the primary characters don't have their

moments, in fact when they interact with the world of the film, rather than the other characters, a sense of powerful realism IS achieved, which is in part what makes the rest of the picture so vexing. With all that being said, I find the variation in the texturization of voices within the gradient of secondary and tertiary characters from a diverse creative team to build an extremely interesting and well flushed out ambient environment. Now, if only the screenwriters and directors (as this project switched directorial hands several times) had the gumption to stick with these more naturalistic presences, the script very well may have felt to be more solidified.

Prior to my initial viewing, I had seen an abundance of critical responses praising the film's usage of color, therefor I entered with a preconceived notion that at least that aspect of the film would be rather impressive. I'd be lying if I said that I wasn't underwhelmed. While yes, the color pallet was certainly quite a bit more interesting than many of the other films out their, there still was a clear base pallet of colder colors being used as a sort of brace, which in places really showed. I find this to be incredibly sad, given that I saw several points in the film where the designers attempted to deviate from that monotone aesthetic, but simply fell back for the sake of playing things safe. With that in mind, I would certainly be curious to see what a different team of creative minds would be capable of building with the same script, and whether or not that would change my outlook on the film in any way.

Now, for all of its flaws, I do recognize that it is important to give this film credit where credit is due. It is certainly interesting, and whether or not you enjoy the plot, you do have to admire the sheer amount of thought that went into it (perhaps too much thought in places) is certainly an impressive feat of intellectualism. And even though I gather there were many times in which the film's producers wanted to shut down the project and replace it with something more appealing to mainstream audiences, the director's clear passion for his vision is what kept the film in production, and led it to finally being released. And while I am well aware that effort doesn't necessarily count for all that much in the film industry as a whole, I do believe that in this situation this demonstration of effort and zeal do hold quite a bit of merit, and overall strengthen my opinion on this film.

So, the question is: Is Hampshire worth your watch? Absolutely. Even if you don't necessarily enjoy it, I can almost guarantee that it will at the very least be found captivating to an engaged viewer. While in many places such as the character dynamics, the dialogue, and even in parts the visuals, this movie may feel rather disjoint and shoddy, there is no denying that there IS a clear presence of genuinely good and innovative ideas. Its just the execution that doesn't always work, and I don't believe this to be any one individual member of the creative team's fault; The direction is solid, the design is creative, and the performances quite often entertaining. I think it is the lack of connection between these cinematic aspects that give the film its messy feel.

To conclude: Hampshire is by no means a bad movie, nor would I say that it is a particularly spectacular one at that. It is a flawed film, and in order to truly appreciate it, it is important that one recognizes it for its flaws and enjoys it for its own sake, rather than slobbering all over it's exterior Oscar-baiting guise. 🐑

Submitted by Ida Kao

"I played a viola once, and I enjoyed it."
- Jay Poggi 🐑

JimxDwight Fanfic

By Justice Mitchell-Burris

Jim bit his bottom lip, a weak chuckle arose from his throat as his eyes stayed on Dwight.

“You can’t be serious, Dwight.” Jim said with disbelief.

Dwight was still unbuttoning his light mustard color work shirt. His tie already on the break room floor.

“I am very serious, Jim. For a long time I felt as if the homosexual nature was a choice. The only reason was, is because I’ve always had the animalistic urge to be with another man.” His monotone voice the same as usual.

“You see, I’ve decided I want to mate with you.” Dwight’s shirt finally off his body and on the ground.

Jim’s eyes raked over Dwights form. His tongue involuntarily licking over his bottom lip.

“And what is I don’t want to “mate” with you?” His voice trying to stay playful and mocking like normal.

Dwight smirked walking all the way over to him. Jim now trapped between the vending machine and Dwights hot body.

Dwight moved his hand to rub against Jim’s clothed cock.

“This speaks for itself.” He whispered leaning in to kiss Jim’s neck.

Jim naturally tilted his head back letting out soft moans as Dwight rubbed his hard cock.

“Say you want me,” Dwight ordered.

“I-I’m not going to say that.” Jim croaked out.

His hand squeezed around Jim’s cock softly.

“Say it,” he hissed out, biting down on Jim’s neck.

“Fu-FUCK! I want you. I want you so badly, Beet Boy,” Jim whined out, arching into his touch.

“That’a Beet Daddy, to you.” Dwight corrected. He moved his hands to Jim’s hips, turning him around so his ass was facing him.

Dwight quickly pulled down Jim’s pants and boxers. His finger rubbing Jim’s sweet asshole before pushing his middle finger inside him.

Jim let out a loud gasp, biting his lip harder trying to hold in his moans.

“God, you could fit my cock without preparation, couldn’t you?” Dwight teased shaking his head. His own cock straining against the fabric of his boxers and pants.

“Please, just slam your huge beet cock in me!” Jim cried in desperation.

With that, Dwight undid his pants and pulled them down along with his boxers. His hands spreading Jim’s cheeks before slamming into his tight hole.

Both of them moaning loudly as Dwight sunk into him.

Dwight didn’t even give Jim time to adjust to the size of him. His hips pounding into him automatically hitting his prostate.

Jim’s hands gripping either side of the vending machine as his hole got destroyed by the man he called enemy less than 20 minutes ago.

Jim’s moans and whines filling the room as he already became close. His asshole clenching around Dwights cock, sending Dwight over the edge. His cum coating the inside of Jim’s needy hole.

“F-fuck,” Jim choked out as he started cumming all over the vending machine from the feeling of Dwights warm cum.

They both stayed there for a moment, not moving an inch.

Slowly Dwight pulled out and fixed himself, getting dressed.

Jim turned around pulling up his own pants and boxers. His heart pounding from what they just did.

“Come to my farm after work, it’ll be more fun,” Dwight winked before walking out.

A blush crossed Jim’s cheeks as he nodded.

He smiled to himself watching Dwight go.

It definitely will.



Here's an argumentative essay that I did in fifth grade 🥰

Why Children Should Have Cell Phones

By Alex Robinson

Do you want your child to be more grown up? Try a cell phone. There has been an ongoing debate about whether or not children should have phones. I think that kids should have cell phones. One reason is that is that cell phones can keep kids safe. Another reason is that cell phones teach kids responsibility. But some people believe that a child can't have a cell phone because they aren't capable of it. What is the truth behind this debate?

One reason why kids should have cell phones is because they help keep kids safe. Many parents are worried about their children when they are away from them. But from bad weather to a change of plans, the cell phone helps parents communicate with their children. "If trouble arises, your child can call home or emergency services with a cell phone," says an article called, "Five Reasons why Your Kids Should Have Cell Phones." Also, you can download GPS [Global Positioning System] features on the phone, like Sprint Family Locator. "Sprint Family Locator is a valuable tool that can help parents and guardians have a better sense of their children's whereabouts when they're apart," says Danny Bowman, vice president of product marketing for Sprint. These are ways that cell phones keep kids safe.

Another reason why kids should have cell phones is because cell phones teach kids responsibility. "A cell phone can teach kids about responsibility, from taking care of the gadget to the minutes and text restrictions," says the article called, "Five Reasons why Your Kids Should Have Cell Phones." And when a child gets a cell phone, responsible opportunities will be opened up, because the child will show more responsibility when he/she gets the phone. Plus, once the child is responsible with the phone, he/she will be more responsible in their life because of the opportunities.

On the other hand, some people think that children should not have phones because it might be a health concern. An article says, "children absorb about 60 percent more radiation into the head than adults." But that same article quickly rebutted the statement in the second paragraph: "scientists haven't studied it long enough to give strong proof either way."

In conclusion, I still strongly believe that kids should have cell phones. They keep kids safe and teaches kids responsibility. Plus, cell phones can bring kids and parents to bond more by using texting. This helps parents to get to know their children better. What more could you ask for? And this is why kids should have cell phones. Now what do you think? 🐑

Submitted by Ida Kao

"A baby's first laugh is sperm."

-Juliana Saxe 🐑

Feeling Uninspired? Bored? Angry at society?

May I suggest joining...

PRINTING CLUB!

"We like to do printing"- Jesus



By Isiah Woods

(Pictured above, left to right: Fig 1. A printer, for printing. Fig 2. Printer paper, also for printing. Fig 3. a picture of a camel, one of the many wonderful things that we could print)

Who we are: A group of impassioned and dedicated students devoted to printing stuff!


Our mission statement: We strive to be constantly printing stuff no matter the hour, weather, or any other occurrence. Why? Because we can!

Proposed budget: Whatever "The Omen" gets x2

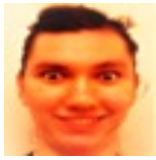
What will we be printing?: All sorts of things! We really couldn't give a fuck what we're putting out, as long as the printer keeps going!

Club mascot: Printy the printer! (TBD)

So please consider joining our happy printer-loving family! Because we don't just print paper, we print happiness.*

**In this case happiness may or may not mean a fuck ton of pictures of camels.* 

America is Being Divided. here's how we can Make it Worse.



Wayne Slaughter

Opinion Writer and Professional Puppy Kicker

A crisis is looming in our country. A global pandemic is threatening our world, or, depending on who you listen to, a global pandemic has been staged in order to inject people with microchips, microcrackers, and micropretzels. Rather than simply pretending to disagree on issues knowing that the Democratic politicians will inevitably go along with anything, Donald Trump's supporters have done the exact same thing but are now way more annoying about it.

Increasingly partisan politicians, after losing the election, claim that the results of the election are illegitimate and do not represent the will of the people. Seeing it written like that, that's actually exactly what happens. But these claims have been weaponized in polarized arguments between politicians.

This division has trickled down to the people of this country. There has been a spike in Alt-Right violence in the past several years. Also I imagine this applies to the left as well but I can't back this up in any way. Of course the mainstream media will cover up this hatred and enmity: putting "mob" into google will deliver you images of some bowl-cut wearing child from a Japanese Cartoon.

There is a glaring problem here. There is not enough hatred between people in this country. The levels of violence between citizens of this country has been at disappointingly low numbers since 1865. People still have room to care about whether or not the Army will send soldiers to kill children in the middle east. We as a country needs to get to the point where sending the Army to kill children in this country (at the level they do in the middle east) is an option that's legitimately on the table.

If this country is to heal, we need to work together and put aside our differences, such as people facing discrimination to stop being so mad about it. If we want this opposite, for this country to become even more hellish and damaged, we need to do the opposite. We need to go from tension and fear that we might erupt into civil war, to tension and fear that it might never end.

Over the course of the Trump presidency, America has become a joke among other countries. For 4 years leader that blatantly disregards science (more than usual), stoops to name-calling (more than usual), and refuses to pretend to act on climate change. Our citizens are increasingly undereducated and ignorant. Other countries should not laugh at our ignorance, they should fear it.

Our founding fathers wrote that they intended for our country to be a civilized country that treated everyone equally and represented people as a united nation. However, I believe actions speak louder than words, and those dudes committed multiple genocides. Of course, in a more tolerant society committing mass murder and extermination based on racism is pretty fucked up.

I propose that the best way to act on the United States of America's history without being racist enough for H.P. Lovecraft to ask us to dial it back is to commit wanton indiscriminate violence on every person who asks us to change our behavior in any way..*

**Note: This piece is created for humorous purposes and none of the views reflected in it represent any actual views of the author.*



Section Hate

By Marissa Neilberg

OH, HONEY
YOU'RE NOT CANCELLED



YOU'RE JUST CRINGE



Submitted by Ida Kao



SHOULD WE GET PAID MINIMUM WAGE?

PIZZA 

ooo

+

TOWN HALL

WITH FUNDCOM OFFICERS

NOVEMBER 15TH, 18TH, 19TH

**FPH
MAIN
LECTURE
HALL**